



the wyoming game and fish department

April 2016

# CODY REGION newsletter

## Mountain lion mystery



**A mountain lion carcass found floating in Buffalo Bill Reservoir last month.**

Last month, Game and Fish received a report of a dead mountain lion floating in Buffalo Bill Reservoir west of Cody. The fisherman who reported the incident retrieved the carcass with a small boat and brought it to shore. Upon investigation and a necropsy, South Cody Game Warden Craig Smith found the lion to be in good physical condition and suspects no foul play. Smith said it was most likely a case of natural mortality from drowning.

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*serving the Bighorn Basin*



## On the ground

### Bighorn sheep respiratory disease surveillance and body condition monitoring

Last month, Cody Region personnel, Wildlife Veterinary Research Services laboratory staff and a crew from University of Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit were in the field capturing 33 bighorn sheep for disease research and body condition monitoring. Several northern herds were selected for this research including Whiskey Basin, Jackson and Absaroka. Sixteen of the 33 sheep were captured locally in the North Fork and South Fork of the Shoshone River drainages.

This cooperative project is designed to determine how body condition may influence what species of respiratory pathogens a particular sheep (or herd) may carry. This research involves capturing bighorn ewes twice a year (December and March), sampling for respiratory pathogens, and assessing body condition by measuring their fat depth ultrasonically. This is the second year of this project, and to date, no direct relationship between body condition and pathogen presence has been established.



**Above:** Laboratory Supervisor Hank Edwards collects samples from a bighorn sheep to detect pathogens that can cause respiratory disease.



**Left:** Hank Edwards and Disease Biologist Jessica Jennings-Gaines organize equipment used for aerial net gunning of bighorn sheep and deer.





## On the ground

### Sage grouse lek counts underway



A sage grouse on a lek north of Powell.



Terrestrial Habitat Biologist Jerry Altermatt observes a sage grouse lek.



A large sage grouse lek on Polecat Bench north of Powell.

In April, Game and Fish biologists and wardens conduct sage grouse lek surveys. Throughout the month, specific leks are surveyed three times in good weather conditions, seven to 10 days apart. At each “count” lek, the number of strutting males are counted to help monitor population trends over time.



## In the water

### 4-H group helps collect data on Bighorn River trout

Five members of a Hot Springs County 4-H group lead by Joel Farber helped Game and Fish fisheries biologists collect data on trout in the Bighorn River. The students helped Game and Fish retrieve 15 egg baskets that had been filled with 100 trout eggs and placed in various locations along the river bottom six weeks earlier. Once retrieved, the egg baskets were carefully opened and the number of hatched eggs was recorded. The study is to help biologists determine if there is a significant difference in egg survival of fall verses spring spawning rainbow trout. In May, 15 more egg baskets will be deployed with the spring spawning rainbow trout strain.



Fisheries Biologist Joe Skorupski shows 4-H members how to identify and count the number of hatched eggs in a trout egg basket.



Trout egg basket.



In a impromptu macro invertebrate lesson, Joe Skorupski points out a caddisfly to 4-H members helping collect data.



## Of interest

### River cleanup a success!

Volunteers from Game and Fish, Trout Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Christ Episcopal Church, Cody Wild West River Fest, Wild West Paddle Club and a variety of local businesses cleared debris and garbage from the Shoshone River corridor last month as part of the annual Shoshone River Cleanup. Several truckloads of debris were removed from the river way and banks between DeMaris Springs and the Corbett Bridge.



**Left: Volunteers with a pile of debris collected from the banks of the Shoshone River near Belfry Bridge during the annual Shoshone River Cleanup last month.**

**Above: Debris cleared from the Shoshone River corridor unloaded at the landfill.**



### Pheasant hunting

The Williams family of Cody, who participated in the Forever Wild Family program last year, braved the wind and snow last month to go pheasant hunting on a bird farm in Cowley. Greybull Game Warden Bill Robertson and Lovell Game Warden James Hobbs and their dogs assisted. Special thanks to David Rael for allowing access!

